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Second Sailing towards Immortality and God

*On Plato's *Phaedo* 99e4-100a3, with an Outlook on Descartes' Meditations, AT VII, 67*

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Abstract

This paper deals with the *deuteros plous*, literally 'the second voyage', proverbially 'the next best way', discussed in Plato's *Phaedo*, the key passage being *Phd.* 99e4-100a3. I argue that (a) the 'flight into the *logoi*' can have two different interpretations, a standard one and a non-standard one. The issue is whether at 99e-100a Socrates means that both the student of *erga* and the student of *logoi* consider images ('the standard interpretation'), or the student of *logoi* does not consider images ('the non-standard interpretation'); (b) the non-standard one implies the problem of the hypothesis, a problem analogous to the problem of the elenchus; (c) there is a structural analogy between Descartes' ontological argument for the existence of God in his 5th *Meditation* and the final proof for the immortality of the soul in the *Phaedo*.

Keywords

Plato – *Phaedo* – *deuteros plous* – immortality of the soul – ontological argument for the existence of God

Plato's Socrates uses the term δεύτερος πλοῦς (*Phd.* 99c9-d1) in connection with his intellectual autobiography. His mental history led him away from that 'wisdom' (*sophia*) they call 'the study of nature' (φύσεως ἱστορία, *Phd.* 96a8) to look at 'the truth of things' (τῶν ὄντων τὴν ἀλήθειαν) in the *logoi* (*Phd.* 99e6). He compares this move to a flight—the 'flight into the *logoi*'—and calls this 'flight

into the *logoi* the ‘second voyage’ (δεύτερος πλοῦς, *Phd.* 99c9-d1). The decisive passage runs as follows:

- [S₁] ἔδοξε δὴ μοι χρῆναι εἰς τοὺς λόγους καταφυγόντα ἐν ἐκείνοις σκοπεῖν τῶν ὄντων τὴν ἀλήθειαν.
 [S₂] ἴσως μὲν οὖν ᾧ εἰκάζω τρόπον τινὰ οὐκ ἔοικεν;
 [S₃] οὐ γὰρ πάνυ συγχωρῶ τὸν ἐν λόγοις σκοπούμενον τὰ ὄντα ἐν εἰκόσι μᾶλλον σκοπεῖν ἢ τὸν ἐν ἔργοις.¹

Preliminary translation:

- [S₁] So I decided that I must take refuge in the *logoi* and look at the truth of things in them.
 [S₂] However, perhaps this image is inadequate;
 [S₃] for I do not altogether admit that one who investigates things by means of *logoi* is dealing with images more than one who looks at realities.

First (1.) I will give a non-standard interpretation of this passage, then (2.) I will proceed to the philosophical problem of the passage according to this interpretation, and (3.) I will apply the philosophical problem to the final proof of immortality and draw an analogy with the ontological argument in Descartes’ *Meditations* (AT VII, 67) for the existence of God. I conclude with some remarks on the philosophical aspect of this flight into the *logoi* and the validity of the ontological arguments for the immortality of the soul and the existence of God.

1

The correct meaning of the proverbial expression δεύτερος πλοῦς has been indicated by Eustathios from Thessaloniki (ca. 1110-ca. 1195) by referring to Pausanias: δεύτερος πλοῦς means ‘the next best way’, that is, the way of those who try another method if the first does not succeed, namely those who ‘try oars when the wind fails according to Pausanias’ (*Eust.* p. 1453).² There has

¹ Pl. *Phd.* 99e4-100a3, tr. Grube with modification.

² Cf. Burnet, 1911, *ad loc.*; cf. LSJ s.v.; Martinelli Tempesta 2003, 89: “... il significato del celebre proverbio utilizzato da Platone in *Phd.* 99c-d può essere soltanto quello ... di *second best*, come è suggerito inequivocabilmente da tutte le testimonianze antiche”. *Ibid.* 123-125 is also

been some dispute about whether this is really Plato's intended meaning and whether the expression is not used by Plato in an ironic way here,³ that is, if the second best is not the second best, but the best voyage for the Platonic Socrates. But after the study of Martinelli Tempesta, who insists that the expression δεύτερος πλοῦς is proverbial and not to be confused with a metaphor,⁴ there can be no reasonable doubt that its meaning is that of a second voyage, not *only* in the chronological⁵ but *also* in the evaluative sense of inferiority (δευτερότης) to the first voyage, and that it is not used here in an ironic way,⁶ as it is not used in an ironic sense in the two other occurrences in Plato (*Phlb.* 19c2-3; *Plt.* 300c2) and Aristotle (cf. *EN* 2.9, 1109a34-35; *Pol.* 3.11, 1284b19). In fact, the related comparison of the Socratic enterprise with a 'raft' (*Phd.* 85d1)—instead of a boat—is also not used in an ironic way (unless it is not 'simple' but 'complex' irony).

a useful index of the passages where the expression δεύτερος πλοῦς is used in a proverbial way; he argues on 108-109 (*pace* Kanayama 2000, 88-99) against the interpretation of *Plb.* *Hist.* 8.36.6.2 B.-W. that the δεύτερος πλοῦς means merely the safer voyage second in time. Cf. note 5.

- 3 Cf. Burnet 1911, *ad loc.*: "In any case, Socrates does not believe for a moment that the method he is about to describe is a *pis aller* or 'makeshift'". Gadamer 1968, 254: "Ein sehr ironischer Passus. Ich habe schon in meinem oben abgedruckten Buche 1931 ausgeführt, wie weit gerade die Erforschung des Seienden in den Logoi der Zugang zur Wahrheit des Seienden ist ...". Gadamer seems not to see the problem: how the Socratic *logoi*—esp. the hypothesis of ideas—can lead not only to consistency but also to truth, nor does he distinguish between 'simple' and 'complex' irony. Cf. also Thanassas 2003, 10: "The 'images of logoi' are the only means at our disposal for approaching the truth of beings". But the hypothesis of ideas is not an image. Cf. for the distinction between 'simple' and 'complex' irony Vlastos 1991, 31: "In 'simple' irony what is said just isn't what is meant: taken in its ordinary, commonly understood, sense that statement is simply false. In 'complex' irony what is said is and isn't what is meant: its surface content is meant to be true in one sense, false in another". For Gadamer's interpretation of the *Philebus* in 1931, cf. Ferber 2010.
- 4 "Deuteros plous" is not a metaphor, but just a proverb. In my view, they are two different kinds of expressions: the proverb has a single and fixed meaning which is always the same, while we can use a word or an expression in different metaphorical ways. Of course a proverb can be used as a metaphor of something else, but it is its sole meaning that can refer to something else, which is implied by its not equivocal meaning" (Letter from 25.02.2018, quoted with permission of the author).
- 5 Cf. the scholium quoted in Greene 1938, 14: "Since those who failed in the prior voyage (*proteros plous*) prepare the second safely, the proverb 'second voyage' is said about those who do something safely", quoted in Kanayama 2000, 88-89, esp. 89: "According to this reading, 'second' means only 'second in time' and there is no implication of the inferiority of the second voyage relative to the prior one; it rather suggests that the second voyage is better than the prior in being a safer voyage".
- 6 Cf. already Murphy 1936, 41 n. 1; Hackforth 1955, 127 n. 5.

This 'second voyage' stands in contrast to the 'first' (πρώτος). Although Socrates does not use the expression 'first voyage' (πρώτος πλοῦς), the first voyage is mirrored in his intellectual autobiography as a former student of natural sciences (*Phd.* 95a-99d). It was a method by which he hoped to get direct access to reality, a process ending in disappointment:⁷ it led to complete blindness of the soul, that is, complete ignorance (cf. *Phd.* 99e2-3), because of its bewildering effect (cf. *Phd.* 79c7). In contrast to the 'first voyage', the 'second voyage' has the advantage of being the safer (ἀσφαλέστερον) course (cf. *Lg.* 897e1-2), although slower and more laborious than the first. Thus, the second voyage implies a change of the means or method but not of the goal, that is, 'to look at the truth of things' (σκοπεῖν τῶν ὄντων τὴν ἀλήθειαν, *Phd.* 99e5-6). This goal 'of the second best voyage in search for the cause' (τὸν δεύτερον πλοῦν ἐπὶ τὴν τῆς αἰτίας ζήτησιν, *Phd.* 99c9-d1) implies that the Platonic Socrates investigated the 'true' (ἀληθῶς, *Phd.* 98e1) or 'real' (τῷ ὄντι, *Phd.* 99b2) cause, that is, the final or second-order cause of the mechanical causes, which are only necessary (cf. *Phd.* 99b3) or 'co-causes' (συναίτια, cf. *Phd.* 98c2-e1; *Ti.* 46c7)—'that would direct everything and arrange each thing in such a way as would be best' (*Phd.* 97c5-6). Thus, Socrates starts from the anti-naturalistic assumption that nature has a teleological structure and that the 'study of nature' should explain this structure, a project to be realized by Plato later in the *Timaeus* (cf. *Ti.* 30a2-7).

But can we say in more detail what this 'second best voyage' involves? According to [S₁], it is a flight from direct perception or vision of 'the things' (τὰ πράγματα, *Phd.* 99e3) to the indirect method of the use of *logoi*, which contrast with 'the things'. Plato's Socrates uses here a commonly accepted way of thinking, which we also find for example in the *Apology* (cf. 32a4-5) and *Seventh Letter* (cf. 343c2-3), but then changes what is normally believed, namely that *logoi* are empty talks (ἄδολεσχία, cf. *Phd.* 70c1, *Prm.* 135d5, *Tht.* 195b10; κενεαγορία, *R.* 607b7), and turns it into an interesting philosophical claim, which is at odds with what is normally believed. The common contrast is between the realities (τὰ ὄντα, *Phd.* 99e5)⁸ and mere talk (οἱ λόγοι). The Socratic claim is that the things that are commonly believed to be the realities are not true realities, and that attention to 'mere talk' can lead us to the true realities. So, what looks like a way that leads far off from reality turns out to be just the way to the true realities. It is—so to speak—the Socratic turning away

7 With Goodrich 1902, 382, I assume that τὰ ὄντα σκοπῶν (cf. *Phd.* 100a2) "must refer to the physical speculations previously described and condemned"; therefore I prefer the first of the three interpretations of the 'first voyage', mentioned by Kanayama 2000, 95 n. 112. The best overview of what belongs to Plato's and what to Socrates' mental history is to be found in Hackforth 1955, 127-130.

8 Cf. Burnet 1911, *ad loc.*: "ta onta like ta pragmata".

from ‘the study of nature’ towards the study of what we say (διαλέγεσθαι, cf. *Phd.* 63c7-8). Although the Platonic Socrates does not yet use the substantive ‘dialectical pursuit’ (διαλεκτική μέθοδος, *R.* 533c7),⁹ he speaks nevertheless of ‘another form of pursuit’ (ἄλλος τρόπος τῆς μεθόδου, *Phd.* 97b6-7) to find out ‘the reasons of each thing—why it comes into being, why it perishes, why it exists’ (*Phd.* 96a9-10, tr. Rowe), namely ‘the art concerning the *logoi*’ (ἡ περὶ τοὺς λόγους τέχνη, *Phd.* 90b7). To this art he may have already alluded when he speaks of a ‘path’ or ‘by-way’: ‘It looks as if there’s a by-way (ἀτραπός) that’ll bring us and our reasoning safely through in our search (ἐν τῇ σκέψει)’ (*Phd.* 66b3-4, tr. Rowe with modifications, cf. *Plt.* 258c3). If it is not the straight way, then the by-way brings us “on to the trail in our hunt after truth”.¹⁰ This ‘by-way’ anticipates ‘another form of pursuit’ (ἄλλος τρόπος τῆς μεθόδου, *Phd.* 97b6-7) for which the Platonic Socrates then uses the proverbial expression ‘second voyage’. But both expressions—‘by-way’ and ‘second voyage’—indicate second-choice options to reach the goal. For these ‘second-choice options’ Socrates gives no explicit affirmative theoretical definition (by genus and difference), but a negative contextual one when he distinguishes it (a) from the ‘first voyage’ of Ionian natural philosophy because it makes no use of sense perception or proceeds *a priori* and (b) from ‘antilogic’, that is, arguments that aim merely at contradiction (ἀντιλογικοὶ λόγοι, *Phd.* 90c1, cf. 101e2, *Ar. Nu.* 1173). He describes it positively as a method of ‘giving an account of being’ (λόγον διδοναὶ τοῦ εἶναι), that is, a λόγος τῆς οὐσίας by the method of question and answer (ἐρωτῶντες καὶ ἀποκρινόμενοι, *Phd.* 78d1-2).¹¹

According to these negative contextual definitions, the ‘second voyage’ is not to be identified *immediately* with (a) the hypothetical method or (b) the theory of forms or (c) the explanation of things in terms of formal causes.¹² But we may ask *if* this ‘dialectical turn’ of Socrates leads to (a) the hypothetical method or (b) the theory of forms or (c) the explanation of things in terms of formal causes as defended by Rose.¹³ (In fact, it leads—in my opinion—indirectly to all of them, namely the hypothesis of forms, which explains the characteristics of things by formal causes.) It is—if we may disregard here for a moment Parmenides, DK B3—the first expression of what has later been called ‘metaphysics’¹⁴ in the sense of giving an account of invisible things for

9 Cf. for an interpretation Ferber 1989, 102.

10 Burnet 2011, *ad loc.* Cf. for this difficult passage Burnet 2011, 35-36; Dixsaut 1991, 332 n. 83; Trabattoni 2011, 41 n. 49; Casertano 2015, 292-293.

11 Cf. Burnet 1911, *ad loc.*

12 Cf. Rose 1966, 466-477; Preus and Ferguson 1969, 105.

13 Rose 1966, 473.

14 Cf. Reale 1997, 137-158.

which no experience by our sensory organs is possible. We may therefore also call this ‘flight’ from ‘wisdom’ (σοφία), which they call ‘the study of nature’ (φύσεως ἵστορία, *Phd.* 96a8), Socrates’ ‘dialectical turn’ in the sense of Socrates’ ‘meta-physical turn’.

On the meaning of the word λόγοι in *Phd.* 100a1, which is “not easy to translate”,¹⁵ we do not have an equivalent word in our European languages. Plato may use the word in *Phd.* 100a1 in a non-technical way as in *Phd.* 59a4 in the sense of ‘discussions’ (Grube’s translation). But his “definiteness of intention”, to use an expression of Arne Naess, may be more subtle in [S₁].¹⁶ In fact, there has been a great variety of other translations.¹⁷ I subdivide them into non-sentential and sentential translations and the sentential translations into mono-sentential, poly-sentential and ambiguous translations. Non-sentential translations are ‘Begriffe, conceptos’ (Apelt/Horn/Gual), ‘ideas’ (Jowett). But as Burnet has remarked: “The term *logos* cannot possibly mean ‘concept’. So far as there is any Greek word for ‘concept’ at this date, it is *noêma*”.¹⁸ Ambiguous translations are ‘rationes’ (Ficino), ‘Gedanken’ (Schleiermacher/Rufener) or ‘raisonnement’ (Dixsaut) which do not render the linguistic aspect of *logoi* (cf. *Cra.* 431b5-c1; *Th.* 189e4-6, 202b3-5; *Sph.* 264a8-9) and leave open whether these ‘rationes’ or ‘Gedanken’ or ‘raisonnement’, when expressed in sentences, are mono- or poly-sentential. Mono-sentential translations are ‘definitions’ (Bluck), ‘propositions’ or ‘statements’ (Ross/Kanayama), ‘postulati’ (Reale), or ‘Grund-Sätze’ (Natorp). So Ross writes: “The language of ‘agreement’, and the fact that what Plato calls the ‘strongest *logoi*’ is the proposition that Ideas exist, shows that *logoi* means statements or propositions”.¹⁹

But with the flight into the *logoi*, Plato also looks back to the *Crito*, where he describes his Socrates as ‘the kind of man who listens only to the *logos* [that is, the argument] that on reflection seems best (βέλτιστος) to me’ (*Cri.* 46b4-6). Later on, in the *Parmenides*, young Socrates’ eager desire ἐπὶ τοὺς λόγους (cf. *Prm.* 135d3) implies also a zeal for *logoi* in the sense of arguments. In the section on μισολογία (*Phd.* 89d4), Socrates uses the word also in the sense of arguments (cf. *Phd.* 90b4.6.7.c1.4). Therefore, the ‘mono-sentential’ translations with ‘statements’ or ‘propositions’ may be replaced with ‘poly-sentential’ ones, not with ‘discussions’ (Grube), because discussions may not contain any arguments, but with ‘arguments’ (Hackforth) or ‘theories’ (Tredennick, Gallop)

15 Burnet 1911, *ad loc.*

16 Naess, 1952, 256ff.

17 For a selection, cf. e.g. Murphy 1936, 40; Casertano 2015, 360-362.

18 Burnet 1914, 317 n. 1. So Loriaux 1975, 93: “... dès 99e5, *tous logous* vise plus que de simples ‘notions’”.

19 Ross 1951, 27.

or ‘reasoned accounts’ (Rowe), for theories or reasoned accounts contain arguments.²⁰ Nevertheless, we can maintain the translation ‘propositions’ when we translate λόγοι with Ebert as premises of theories, for premises of theories are propositions.²¹ Thus, I try to elucidate the intended meaning by translating *logoi* in the following way:

[S₁]: ‘So I thought I must take refuge in theories and their premises, and investigate the truth of things in them’.

[S₂] makes an addition and qualification: he declares the comparison with the sight of the reflection of the sun in water to be an image (εἰκάζω) and qualifies the image as being in some sense inadequate. What is in some sense inadequate about this image? To see reality through an image suggests indirect access to reality; however, as Hackforth remarks: “[The image] is a good parallel in so far as the contrast of direct and indirect apprehension goes; but in so far as it might imply that *logoi* stand to physical objects (*erga*) in the relation of images to real things, it is misleading”.²²

[S₃] is indeed “misleading” or “confusing”.²³ It can have (in my opinion) at least two different interpretations. I call these the standard²⁴ and the non-standard or astonishing interpretations.²⁵ In the first interpretation Socrates pursues the parallel; in the second he withdraws it at least in a certain sense. The issue is whether Socrates means that (a) both—the student of *erga* and the student of *logoi*—consider the ‘truth of things’ in images, because *logoi* are also images (‘the standard interpretation’), or (b) the student of *logoi* does not consider ‘the truth of things’ in images, because *logoi* are not *eo ipso* images of the ‘truth of things’, but have to be only consistent (‘the non-standard interpretation’).

20 Cf. Murphy 1936, 40–41: “... *logoi* are verbally contrasted with *erga*, and perhaps some word like ‘theories’, though it is not an exact equivalent, would bring out this contrast, ...”.

21 Cf. Ebert 2004, 350: “Die *logoi*, die Sokrates im Auge hat, sind also offenbar Teile von Argumenten oder allgemeiner von Schlüssen, sind aber selbst keine Argumente oder Schlüsse. Sie haben den Status von Prämissen, aber nicht den von Schlüssen”.

22 Hackforth 1955, 137 mentioned in Frede 1999, 121 n. 29.

23 Gallop 1975, 178: “The sentence [S₃] in which Socrates qualifies his comparison of ‘theories’ with images (a1–2) is confusing in translation.” Cf. the different translations in the appendix. But the sentence is also confusing in Greek.

24 The standard interpretation has been defended, e.g. by Gallop 1975, 178; Bostock 1986, 157–162; Gadamer 1968, 254; Gonzalez 1998, 188–208; Thanassas 2003; Dancy 2004, 295; Costa 2017, 141.

25 The non-standard interpretation has been defended, e.g. by Burnet 1911, *ad loc.*: “It is not really the case that the *logoi* are mere images of *ta onta* or *ta pragmata*”. Dixsaut 1991, 140: “Saisir une réalité à travers un discours réflexif, ce n’est pas n’en saisir qu’une image. Au contraire, c’est l’expérience concrète qui ne livre que l’image de la chose, alors que la réflexion accède à sa réalité véritable”, Kanayama 2000, 47.

In the standard interpretation, the indirect way of theories is not inferior to the direct way, because theories are also images of reality, namely ‘pictures in words’ (cf. *Cra.* 431ab2-c2),²⁶ as the image of the sun in water is an image of the real sun. *Logoi* or theories, which depict (εἰκάζειν) real things, would then be on the same level as what Socrates later called εἰκασία, that is, conjecture through images, or—more exactly—through images of images (cf. *R.* 511e2, 534a1-5; cf. also *R.* 598b6-8).²⁷ As the sun seen ‘in water or some such reflection’ (*Phd.* 99d8-e1, my translation) is an image of the real phenomenon, so *logoi* would be images of realities. Then the upshot of Socrates’ flight into the *logoi* is that theories as images of reality are inadequate—even if they are “images of a higher grade than objects in the sensible world, and thus closer to Forms”.²⁸ Socrates would then in some sense anticipate Wittgenstein’s picture-theory of language and thought: “The picture is a model of [phenomenal] reality” (*TLP* 2.12). As “a model of [phenomenal] reality”, a picture is not an exact representation of phenomenal reality.

In the non-standard interpretation, [S₃] makes the claim that the indirect way of theories is nevertheless not inferior to the direct way of vision; the indirect way does not use *logoi* in the sense of images, whereas the reflection of the sun in water is an image of the real sun.

The standard interpretation, however, involves the following problems: (a) it insinuates that the Platonic Socrates treats *logoi* like images—or even εἰκασίαι—that is, conjectures through images of images; (b) it insinuates that *these* conjectures posit ideas and then (c) assumes the logical impossibility that the *logoi* which posit ideas (cf. *Phd.* 100b5) depict first what they then posit; (d) it leaves open the question about what false *logoi*, which misrepresent ‘the truth of things’, depict; and (e) nowhere in the *Phaedo* are ‘objects in the sensible world’ called explicitly ‘images of Forms’.²⁹

26 I owe this reference to *Cra.* 431b2-c2 to Costa 2017, 28. Costa is anticipated by Bostock 1986, 160, who gives the following caveat: “However, it is not even clear that this (rather confused) line of thought was Plato’s own view at the time when he wrote the *Cratylus*. This is partly because the dialogue goes on to reject the premiss that names need to be rightly framed (434c-435c), and partly because there are evidently many things in that dialogue that Plato is not very serious about, and the way the argument is extended from names to propositions may well be one of them”. Quoted without footnote.

27 Cf. Ferber 1989, 85-91 and 111-114.

28 Gallop 1975, 178.

29 Cf. for anticipations of the *interpretatio difficilior* Natorp 1903, 156; 2004, 167: “For logic is not something like a mere organ or instrument with which to grasp the ‘existing’ objects to be found outside us; it is not merely the eye-glass that protects from blinding, in order that we may look with impunity at the externally existing being of sensible things that radiates in the sunlight, so to speak, of immediate truth in itself. This simile is defective for

But let us (f) nevertheless assume that the standard view is right: what, then, would have been the ‘philosopher’s progress’ if the Platonic Socrates turns from the old method of observation of facts to the new one of *logoi* as inadequate images of facts? Would in this case Socrates not merely turn from blindness to inexactness or even confusion and his ‘progress’ be a regress—to the malicious joy (*Schadenfreude*) of his enemies?

Since I do not allow this joy to his enemies, I prefer the non-standard interpretation. In fact, the Socrates who turns to *logoi* in the sense of theories and their premises is not simply looking at reflections: the criterion of consistency (*συμφωνία*) which *logoi* have to fulfil (*Phd.* 100a5) suggests that *logoi* are not just images or reflections of real things in the sense of the correspondence theory of truth, but that *συμφωνία* or “consistency should suffice for truth”.³⁰ In fact we read:

but in any case this was my starting point: hypothesizing (ὑποθέμενος) on each occasion whatever account I judge to have the most explanatory power, I posit as true (ἀληθῆ ὄντα) whatever seems to me in tune (συμφωνεῖν) with this ...

Phd. 100a3-4, tr. ROWE

So in the non-standard interpretation *logoi* are not images of real things, but are posited as true even if they are only in tune or consistent with each other.

In this non-standard interpretation, Socrates will, as in the standard interpretation, “not admit that discussion is a less direct approach to truth than sense”³¹ or, more exactly, “not altogether admit that his method of studying things is less direct than that of the physicists ...”.³² But the non-standard interpretation gives quite a different twist to these words than the common one does: the physicists study things ἐν ἔργοις, that is, in reality.³³ Socrates studies things ἐν λόγοις, that is, in the premises of theories. If Socrates “will not altogether admit that his indirect method of studying things is less direct than that

it is not the logical shape of being that is merely a copy ...” (tr. Politis/Connolly). Murphy 1936, 43: “the λόγοι are in no sense *like* the things being studied, and it becomes equally clear as we read on that the λόγοι are not λόγοι *of* the things.... But surely they are independent propositions and thoughts introduced *ab extra*”. Λόγοι (and hypotheses) are for Socrates not on the same level as images or εἰκασίαι, cf. *R.* 51d6-4.

30 Vlastos 1991, 15.

31 Shorey 1933, 131.

32 Ross 1953, 27.

33 Robin 1950, XLIX: “L’expression ἐν ἔργοις, ... fait penser à l’ἐνέργεια d’Aristote: *acte* qui est à la fois forme logique et réalité; qui, à l’état pur, est Dieu même”.

of the physicists”, then his indirect method is not less direct than that of the physicists. If it is not less direct, it is at least on an equal footing to the physicists’ method of getting at the truth of things. In the words of Kanayama: “[A]n enquirer who studies his objects in *logoi* studies them as directly and clearly as those who study in concrete, and what’s more, without any fear of being blinded by the employment of the senses”.³⁴

2

The question—not asked by Kanayama—now arises: how is it possible that the indirect way of arguments is on an equal footing with the more direct way of seeing, that is: τὸ σκοπεῖν ἐν λόγοις τὰ ὄντα is on equal footing with τὸ σκοπεῖν τὰ ὄντα ἐν ἔργοις? This problem is analogous to the problem that Vlastos called “the problem of the elenchus”;³⁵ let us call it the problem of the hypothesis, that is—to use an expression from the pseudo-Platonic *Definitions*—the problem of the ‘unproved principle’ (ἀρχὴ ἀναπόδεικτος, *Def.* 415b10).

In distinction to the elenchus of Plato’s Socrates in the early dialogues, the Platonic Socrates of the *Phaedo* does not start from premises or hypotheses (*hypotheseis*) made by the interlocutor (cf. e.g. *Euthphr.* 11c4-5; *Hp.Ma.* 302c12; *Grg.* 454c4-5) to which he is not committed, but from his own to which he is committed. Nevertheless, the ‘problem of the elenchus’ persists in the problem of the hypothesis or ‘unproved principle’. For all the theories can do is to arrive—like Plato’s Socrates and his interlocutors in the early dialogues at ὁμολογία (cf. e.g. *Chrm.* 157c6-7; *Ly.* 219c4; *Grg.* 487e6-7)—at συμφωνία, that is, ‘harmony’ or ‘concord’ (cf. *Phd.* 100a5). The expression συμφωνία or ‘concord’ has been made more precise by Robinson here and at 101d5 by distinguishing ‘consistency’ from deducibility (cf. *Prt.* 333a6-8; *Grg.* 457e1-3; *Phdr.* 270c6-7).³⁶

I cannot enter here into the logical problems which the translations ‘consistency’ and ‘deducibility’ offer.³⁷ I make only the following point concerning

34 Kanayama 2000, 47.

35 Vlastos 1983, 38-39: “[T]he question then becomes how Socrates can claim, ... to have proved that the refutand is false, when all he has established is the inconsistency of p with premisses whose truth he has not undertaken to establish in that argument: they have entered the argument simply as propositions on which he and the interlocutor are agreed. This is *the* problem of the Socratic elenchus ...”.

36 Robinson 1953, 131.

37 Cf. Robinson 1953, 126-136. But cf. Kahn 1996, 316: “I suggest that the term for consequence is deliberately avoided, because Plato is here presenting the method hypothesis as more flexible and also more fruitful than logical inference.... Whatever is incompatible with some basic feature of the model, as specified in the *hypothesis*, will be ‘out of tune’

consistency. If a hypothesis leads to inconsistent consequences, then it is supposed to be false: ‘if anyone should question the hypothesis itself, you would ignore him and refuse to answer until you could consider whether its consequences were mutually consistent (συμφωνεῖ) or not (διαφωνεῖ)’ (*Phd.* 101d3-5, tr. Rowe). If the consequences are not mutually consistent, then the hypothesis is false and has to be rejected.

But consistency or ‘concord’ is only a negative test of truth.³⁸ Nevertheless, we can ask the question which remains open: *logoi* or theories may be consistent or harmonious like a piece of music, but are they also true in the sense of corresponding to reality? Mere consistency is for the Platonic Socrates not yet by itself a guarantee of truth: ‘if your premise (ὑπόθεσις) is something you do not really know and your conclusion and intermediate steps are a tissue (συμπλέκεται) of things you do not really know, your reasoning may be consistent with itself (ὁμολογία),³⁹ but how can it amount to knowledge (ἐπιστήμη)?’ (*R.* 533c5-6, tr. Cornford; cf. *Cra.* 436c7-d7). What is said here from mathematical *hypotheses*, which the mathematicians laid down as ‘known’ (*R.* 510c6) and treat as absolute or non-hypothetical assumptions, seems to me valid in an analogous way also to the hypothesis of ideas (cf. *Phd.* 100b1-9). If the hypothesis of ideas is laid down as something much ‘talked about’ (τὰ πολυθρύλητα, *Phd.* 100b5), it is therefore not yet true, even if it finds the consensus of the interlocutors and its consequences are mutually consistent.

In fact, we find in Plato not only consensus (ὁμολογία, cf. *Grg.* 487e6-7) or consistency (συμφωνία) as a criterion of truth (*Phd.* 100a4-7), but also correspondence: ‘a true *logos* says that which is, and a false *logos* says that which is not’ (*Cra.* 385b7-8; cf. *Sph.* 263b3-7). “The [true] statement as a whole is

(*diaphônein*) or fail to accord. But the positive relationship of ‘being in accord’ (*symphônein*, *synâidein*) is not mere consistency. It means fitting into the structure, bearing some positive relationship to the model by enriching or expanding it in some way”. This point has been further developed by Bailey 2005, esp. 104-110, by accentuating the musical connection of “being in accord”, a point made also by Stefanini 1949, 258: “*Il criterio della verità, è, adunque, la legge stessa della musica: armonia. Ciò che resta fuori dell'euritmia universale è ad un tempo dissonante e falso*”.

38 Cf. Robinson 1953, 135-136: “‘Seeing whether the results accord’, considered as a test, is merely negative. It can sometimes show that the hypothesis must be abandoned, but never that it must retained”. Cf. Leibniz, 1980, 294: “Cum ergo causas rerum ex optimi electione sumptas, neque ipse per me consequi, neque ab alio me discere posse viderem, velut secunda navigatione instituta aliud ingressus sum iter, quod si non omnia explicet, nihil tamen patiaturs dici falsum” (“... after establishing something like a second voyage I did enter another path which, if it does not explain everything, does not tolerate that something false is said” (my translation).

39 ὁμολογία may mean consensus or consistency. Cf. the remarks to ὁμολογουμένως (*R.* 510d2) in Ferber 1989, 96, where I plea rather for consensus.

complex and its structure *corresponds to* the structure of the fact”.⁴⁰ In the same vein, we could say: a true hypothesis says that which is, and a false one says that which is not.

If the Socrates of the *Phaedo* tries to investigate ‘in the *logoi*’ ‘the truth of things’, he tries to arrive by his flight into the *logoi* at the reality of things. Therefore, [S₃] seems to indicate that, nevertheless, mere consistency is by itself a guarantee of truth no less than correspondence is.

Metaphorically speaking, the second sailing is no less a method to arrive at the goal—‘the truth of things’—than is the first; or the rowing boat is no less a vehicle to get to the final destination than is the sailing boat. Or to put it differently again: by dreaming—as sometimes Socrates does (cf. *Smp.* 175e2-3; *Cra.* 439c6-d; *Phd.* 60e1-61a4)—we may arrive at reality as in a state of wakefulness, whereas by seeing with our eyes we are blinded—at least if our dreams are consistent.

To use the metaphor which the Platonic Socrates uses in the *Republic*: by distinguishing the essence of the Good from everything else and ‘surviving like in a battle all attacks of refutations’ (ὥσπερ ἐν μάχῃ διὰ πάντων ἐλέγχων διεξιὼν, *R.* 534c1-2, free tr. Ferber) with a ‘*logos* not liable to fall’ (ἀπτῶτι τῷ λόγῳ, *R.* 534c3), the philosopher-kings and -queens not only survive all attacks with an infallible or irrefutable *logos*, but they are ‘brought at last to the goal’ (*R.* 540a6), namely ‘to lift up the eye of the soul to gaze on that which sheds light on all things’ (*R.* 540a7-9), that is, ‘the Good itself’ (*R.* 540a8-9), a ‘principle which is not a hypothesis’ (ἀρχὴ ἀνυπόθετος, *R.* 510b7) to which the ‘something sufficient’ (τι ἱκανόν, *Phd.* 101e1) may allude.⁴¹

This is quite an astonishing claim. The question was *in principle* aptly formulated by Davidson:

Consistency is, of course, necessary if *all* our beliefs are to be true. But there is not much comfort in mere consistency. Given that it is almost certainly the case that some of our beliefs are false (though we know not which), making our beliefs consistent with one another may as easily reduce as increase our store of knowledge.⁴²

In fact, the flight into the *logoi* takes the risk that some of the *logoi*—or even the *logos* judged to be the ‘strongest’ (*Phd.* 100a4), that is, the ‘hardest to refute’

40 Cornford 1935, 311.

41 Cf. Gallop 1975, 190-191. This is nevertheless a disputable issue, cf. Verdenius 1958, 231; Ferber 1989, 100.

42 Davidson 2005, 223.

(δυσεξελεγκτότατος, *Phd.* 85c9-d1)—are false. Now the method with which the Platonic Socrates takes refuge in the *logoi* in the *Phaedo* is the method of mathematics known from the *Meno* as the method of hypothesis (ἐξ ὑποθέσεως, *Men.* 86e3). But in the *Phaedo*, it is neither a mathematical hypothesis that is put forward (cf. *Men.* 85b7-86d2) nor the hypothesis that virtue is a science ('if virtue is a science, then it would be teachable', *Men.* 87c5-6). It is the hypothesis that ideas exist where 'is' has the emphatic Parmenidean meaning of being real or really real (ὄντως ὄν).⁴³

My aim is to try to show you the kind of reasons that engage me, and for that purpose I'm going to go back to those much-talked-about entities (πολυθρύλητα) of ours—starting from them, and hypothesizing that there's something that's beautiful and nothing but beautiful, in and by itself, and similarly with good, big, and all the rest. If you grant me these, and agree that they exist, my hope is, starting from them, to show you the reason for things and establish that the soul is something immortal.⁴⁴

The reasoning is roughly this: if the hypothesis of ideas is true, then the soul is immortal. Not only does the theory of ideas depend on a hypothesis, but the final proof of the immortality of the soul also depends on a hypothesis, the hypothesis of ideas (*Phd.* 100b7-9).⁴⁵ So the immortality of the soul is, like the theory of ideas, 'something necessary because of a hypothesis' (ἐξ ὑποθέσεως ἀναγκαῖον, cf. *Arist. PA* 1.1, 642a9).

But in the short time before his death—as long as there is still daylight' (*Phd.* 89c7-8)—the Platonic Socrates cannot do what the Platonic Parmenides does later in the *Parmenides*: to consider the consequences of the negations of his hypothesis, namely 'if that same thing is hypothesized (ὑποτίθεσθαι) not to be' (*Prm.* 136a1-2). What are the consequences if 'the beautiful, the good and every such reality' (*Phd.* 76d8-9) are hypothesized not to be? In fact, concerning the pre-existence of the soul Socrates assumes: if these realities do not exist, then would not this argument be altogether futile (cf. *Phd.* 76e4-5)?

But how without this time-consuming 'exercise' (*Prm.* 135c8, 135d4.7, 136c5) does the Platonic Socrates know that his hypothesis of the individual ideas is not false as a hypothesis (cf. *Arist. APr.* 62b12-20)—as other hypotheses of him have been proven false (cf. *Arist. Pol.* 2, 1261a16, 1263b29-31)—or, even worse,

43 Cf. for the influence of Parmenides in the *Phaedo* Hackforth 1955, 84-85.

44 *Phd.* 100b1-9, tr. Rowe.

45 Cf. Sedley 2018, 210-220.

idle talk (ἄδολεσχία, cf. *Phd.* 70c1, *Prm.* 135d5, *Tht.* 195b10; κενεαγορία, *R.* 607b7), as commonly assumed?

In fact, Plato's first interpreter, Aristotle, will say that the πολυθρύλητα—the Platonic ideas—are τερετίσματα (*APo.* 1.22, 83a33), that is, twitters, and to speak of ideas as paradigms and participating is κενολογεῖν, 'idle talk' (cf. *Metaph.* 1.9, 991a21–22). Aristotle refers with this critique clearly to the δεύτερος πλοῦς of the *Phaedo* (cf. *Metaph.* 1.9, 991b3–7); already Aristotle's remark '... [Plato's] introduction of the Forms (ἡ τῶν εἰδῶν εἰσαγωγή), was due to his inquiry in the *logoi* (τὴν ἐν τοῖς λόγοις ἐγένετο σκέψιν), for the earlier did not partake in dialectic ...' (*Metaph.* 1.6, 987b31–33) is "pretty clearly a reminiscence" of *Phd.* 99e5–100a4.⁴⁶ In *De generatione et corruptione*, Aristotle explicitly attributes the theory not to Plato, but to the Platonic Socrates, that is, 'the Socrates in the *Phaedo*' (ὁ ἐν τῷ Φαίδωνι Σωκράτης, *GC* 2.9, 335b10–14; cf. *Pol.* 2, 1261a6).

The answer of Plato's Socrates on 'the problem of the Socratic elenchus' was: like Meno's slave we have hidden in us true opinions (cf. *Men.* 81a–d, 85b–86b), because we are 'fallen souls', for 'the truth of things is always in our soul' (*Men.* 86b1). Davidson thus writes in his article 'Plato's Philosopher':

[T]he assumption is that, *in moral matters, everyone has true beliefs which he cannot abandon and which entail the negations of his false beliefs.* It follows from this assumption that all the beliefs in a consistent set of beliefs are true, so a method like the elenchus which weeds out inconsistencies will in the end leave nothing standing but truths.⁴⁷

In the same vein, the Platonic Socrates *could* say in the *Phaedo*, evoking the *Meno*: everyone has hidden true beliefs about the universals like 'the equal' (cf. *Phd.* 74a5–75a3). Although 'the equal' seems to belong to the *metaxy* between Ideas and sense phenomena (cf. Arist. *Metaph.* A6 987b14–18),⁴⁸ as Socrates uses also the plurals 'the equals themselves' (αὐτὰ τὰ ἴσα, *Phd.* 74c1) and 'the three' (τὰ τρία, *Phd.* 104e1), the 'equal' is nevertheless a universal like 'the beautiful, the good and every such reality' (*Phd.* 76d8–9). But at the end of the day this hypothesis will remain true because an examination of it would leave realism about the universals like the equal and 'the beautiful, the good and every

46 Cf. Ross 1924, vol. 1, 171, and now the careful article of Delcomminette 2015.

47 Davidson 2005, 229.

48 Cf. Wipern 1970, 276–277: "Die Lösung dieser Aporie kann von Platon aus gesehen nur darin liegen, dass jedenfalls die Seele und die scheinbar nur der Exemplifikation dienenden partikulären 'Ideen' der μονάς, δυνάς, τριάς oder der πεμπάς eine Art *Zwischenstellung* zwischen dem Reich der absoluten εἶδη selbst und der sinnlich wahrnehmbaren Dinge innehaben". Cf. also Wipern 1970, 277 n. 14; Schiller 1967, 57–58; and Ross 1924, 194 *ad loc.*

such reality' as the only viable option about the universals. We arrive through the δεύτερος πλοῦς at reality as through the πρῶτος, because in us there are true opinions about the universals, which entail negations of the false opinions and cannot be shaken or are elenchus-resistant, but must be made explicit by cross-examination.

Metaphorically, we can give the answer in the following way: the rowing boat has in itself a sail, which can be hoisted; that is, by τὸ σκοπεῖν ἐν λόγοις, we arrive at the ἀλήθεια τῶν ὄντων. Or, to use another metaphor: our soul as the 'place of ideas' (τόπος εἰδῶν, Arist. *De an.* 3.4, 429a27-28)⁴⁹ is a mirror of the truth, but has in its incarnated form to be purified from its hidden contradictions by an examination of the *logoi* until it can see the unveiled truth.

Again, in the same vein, Socrates could say: everyone has hidden true beliefs about his soul and its destiny after his death, for example that the soul brings life (φέρουσα ζώην, cf. *Phd.* 105d3-4; *Cra.* 399d11-e2; *Lg.* 895c11-12) 'whenever it exists' (ὅτανπερ ᾗ, *Phd.* 103e5),⁵⁰ which entail the negations of his false beliefs, for example that the soul dies with the body. The hypothesis of the immortality of the soul will remain true at the end, because an examination of this hypothesis would leave it as the only elenchus-resistant and viable option.

And only now are we finally able to disentangle the kernel of truth in the 'standard interpretation' according to which the student of *logoi* considers the 'truth of things' in images: *logoi* or theories may become images of 'the truth of things' in the sense of the correspondence theory only when purified from their hidden contradictions. But they are then no longer εἰκασίαι, that is, conjectures through images, or through images of images (cf. *R.* 511e2, 534a1-5; cf. also *R.* 598b6-8), but express at least true beliefs which say that what is.

I use the expression 'true beliefs', not 'knowledge', because there is in the *Phaedo* a caveat: as long as our soul is in a body, we may come in the best case as near as possible or 'very near' (ἐγγύτατα, *Phd.* 65e4, 67a3; cf. ὁμοιότατον, 80b3 with ἐγγύς τι τούτου, 80b10) to the truth about the destiny of our soul, but it remains at a 'distance' from the truth—caused by our corporeality. There is a distance between pure knowledge, which would imply complete consistency of our belief system, and the closest approach to this knowledge in life, which is not possible to be bridged by a 'by-way' or 'short cut' (ἀτραπός, *Phd.* 66b4):

[If] it's impossible to get pure knowledge of anything in the company of the body, then one or the other of two things must hold: either knowledge

49 Cf. Ferber 2007, 183.

50 Cf. for the remarks "whenever it exists" (ὅτανπερ ᾗ, *Phd.* 103e5) the neglected, but pertinent, remarks of Wipperfurth 1970, 273-274.

can't be acquired, anywhere, or it can be, but only when we're dead; because that's when the soul will be alone by itself, apart from the body, and not until then.⁵¹

If this principle is applied to the soul, it is impossible to acquire pure knowledge of its immortality in the company of the body, that is, in this life, although it may be possible to attain different degrees of approximations, depending on the progressive degrees of separation from the body (cf. *Phd.* 67a2-3).⁵² But only after death, that is, after our *excarnation*, would we not only *believe*, but really *know* that we are immortal, if we are after death—paradoxically speaking—still alive.

This human impossibility to arrive at pure knowledge seems to remain true for Plato right up to the digression in the 7th letter 'because of the weakness of the *logoi* or arguments' (διὰ τὸ τῶν λόγων ἀσθενές, *Ep.* 7, 343a1)⁵³—a corollary of the 'human weakness' (ἀνθρωπίνη ἀσθένεια, *Phd.* 107b1; cf. *Lg.* 853e10-854a1; *Plt.* 278c9-d6) caused by the *incarnation* of our souls. To this 'human weakness' also the δεύτερος πλοῦς in the *Philebus* may allude: 'but while it is a great thing for the wise man to know everything, the second best voyage (δεύτερος πλοῦς) is not to ignore oneself, it seems to me' (*Phlb.* 19c1-3, tr. Frede with modification). This *körperliche Verdüsterung* of our soul—to use an expression of old Goethe⁵⁴—may remain true even in the 'so called unwritten doctrines' (Arist. *Ph.* 209b14-15) if old Plato has said there: "Not only the happy (*eutychounta*) but also the proving (*apodeiknynta*) human being (cf. *Phd.* 77a5, b2-3, c2-6, d4, 87a4-c4, 105e8) must remember that he is a human being".⁵⁵

3

Phd. 99e4-100a3 belongs to the 'autobiographical pages' of Plato's Socrates. These pages have been called the "ancient counterpart of Descartes' *Discours de la Méthode pour bien conduire sa raison*".⁵⁶ Thus, for example Gallop writes:

⁵¹ *Phd.* 66e4-67a2.

⁵² Cf. Fine 2016, 563-564.

⁵³ Cf. Ferber 2007, esp. 56-66, 106-120. The interpretation of Burnyeat/Frede 2015, 121-132 does not take into account this discussion. Cf. now *inter alia* the critique of Burnyeat/Frede by Szlezák 2017, 311-323, esp. 318-320.

⁵⁴ Talks with Eckermann, March 11, 1828.

⁵⁵ Gaiser 1963, 455, Testimonium 11.

⁵⁶ Taylor 1936, 200 n. 1: "The autobiographical pages of our dialogue are thus the ancient counterpart of Descartes' *Discours de la Méthode pour bien conduire sa raison* with the

“Like Descartes, Socrates professes to be confused by the senses and to abandon their use. Both are pioneers of a new philosophical method. Both seek metaphysical foundations for mathematics and natural sciences. And both formulate basic certainties that fortify their religious convictions”.⁵⁷

Here we may go a step further by *comparing* the ‘final proof’ for the immortality of the soul with Descartes’ ontological argument for the existence of God. The ‘final proof’ extends from *Phd.* 105c9–107a1 and consists of two parts, a first sub-proof that the soul, since it is the cause of life in the body, is immortal (*Phd.* 105c9–e7), and a second sub-proof that the soul, since it is immortal, is indestructible (*Phd.* 105e10–107a1). The second sub-proof has also been called the ‘ultimate final proof’;⁵⁸ I call the first sub-proof the penultimate one.

The penultimate draws the conclusion: ‘In that case soul (ψυχή) is something deathless—immortal’ (*Phd.* 105e6, tr. Rowe). The ‘ultimate final proof’ draws the conclusion: “there’s nothing clearer, then, Cebes”, said Socrates, “than that soul is something immortal and imperishable (ψυχὴ ἀθάνατον καὶ ἀνώλεθρον), and that really and truly *our* souls will be there in Hades (τῷ ὄντι ἔσσονται ἡμῶν αἱ ψυχαὶ ἐν Ἀΐδου) after all” (*Phd.* 106e8–107a1, tr. Rowe). So the premises of the final proof are the hypotheses of the individual ideas (see above) and the conclusion is (a) soul (ψυχή) is something deathless/immortal and (b) indestructible and (c) *our* souls will indeed be in Hades.

After Frede (1978) and Denyer (2007), Sedley (2018) has made a new—and as far as I know, the best available—attempt to show the validity of this conclusion, given the premises.⁵⁹ In the following, I will not dare to make another new attempt to show the validity of this conclusion, but I will try to show that the ‘final proof’ for the immortality of the soul shares with the ontological argument for the existence of God the same structure in the following sense: by σκοπεῖν ἐν λόγοις, we are supposed to arrive at the ἀλήθεια τῶν ὄντων. But if this is true, it shares also one of the problems.

I quote here from the penultimate final proof only the following lines:

“Well now, what do we call that which does not admit death?”

“Deathless/immortal [*athanaton*].”

“Does soul not admit death?”

interesting differences, (1) that though both philosophers are concerned to simplify philosophy by getting rid of a false and artificial method, Descartes’ object is to revive the very ‘mechanical’ interpretation of nature which Socrates rejected, and (2) that Socrates left it to the piety of another to do for his mental history what Descartes did for himself”.

57 Gallop 1975, 169.

58 Cf. Pakaluk 2010, 643–677.

59 Sedley 2018, 221–220. Cf. also Frede 1978 and Denyer 2007.

"No."

"Then soul is something deathless/immortal?" "It is something deathless/immortal."

"Well now," said Socrates, "are we to say that this has been proved? What do you think?"

"Yes, and most sufficiently, Socrates."⁶⁰

This argument has a certain affinity with the ontological argument used by Descartes in his *Discours de la Méthode* (AT VI, 36) and his *5th Meditation on First Philosophy*.⁶¹ I prefer Descartes' version of the ontological argument because it has more affinity with the final proof than does Anselm's. Like the *Phaedo*, Descartes' *Meditations* try to prove the immortality of the soul, as is indicated by the subtitle of the first edition (1641) of the *Meditations*, *In qua Dei existentia et animae immortalitas demonstratur*.⁶²

... from the fact that I cannot think of God except as existing (*nisi existentem*), it follows that existence is inseparable from God (*existentiam a deo esse inseparabilem*), and hence that he really exists (*revera existere*). It is not that my thought makes it so, or that it imposes any necessity on anything; but, on the contrary, it is the necessity which lies in the thing itself, that is, the necessity of the existence of God, which determines me to think in this way: for it is not in my power to conceive a God without existence, that is, a being supremely perfect, and yet devoid of an absolute perfection, as I am free to imagine a horse with or without wings.⁶³

60 *Phd.* 105e2-10, tr. Sedley.

61 The first to have made this observation seems to be Nietzsche 1995, 184: "Die letzte [Stufe] ist die des ontologischen Beweises, aus dem Begriffe: eine todte Seele ist ein logischer Widerspruch", then Robin 1950, 82 n. 1, quoted in Moreau 1947, 328 n. 1. We find a fuller treatment in Moreau 1947, 320-343, esp. 328-329: "la conclusion qu'on cherche à tirer de la définition de l'âme suppose une inférence de l'essence à l'existence; en quoi consiste précisément une argumentation ontologique". After Moreau, O'Brien 1968, 95-106, writes (here 104): "The conclusion of our unfolding of Plato's argument would be that many things may exist: but that one thing, soul, always and so necessarily or essentially exists. In this the complete explication of Plato's argument leads us to something like the notion of a necessary being, a necessary being of the kind that is required as the object of the so-called ontological argument for the existence of God". But the analogy is not so much the analogy with a necessary being, but with a being whose existence is enclosed in its perfection.

62 In fact, the *Meditations* arrive only at a premiss for the proof of the immortality of the soul (cf. AT VII, 5-6) by proving its "real distinction" from the body (AT VII, 71), cf. Ebert 1992, 189.

63 AT VII, 67, tr. Veitch/Cottingham.

The analogy consists in the following: as the *penultimate* proof for the existence of an immortal soul concludes from the meaning of the expression ‘soul’ or ψυχή that a soul does not admit death *and* is—after the ‘*ultimate final proof*’—indestructible (cf. *Phd.* 106d5-7),⁶⁴ so, too, does the ontological argument conclude from the meaning of the word ‘God’ as implying ‘existence’ in the sense of a perfection that God exists *and* is real (*existentiam a Deo esse inseparabilem, ac proinde illum revera existere*, *AT VII*, 67). But when God really (*revera*) exists, his existence is also indestructible. Thus, it would be a contradiction to think of God—that is, a supremely perfect being—as lacking real existence and being destructible, because he would then lack perfection and not be a supremely perfect being, just as it is a contradiction to think of an immortal and indestructible soul as mortal and destructible. Both proofs try to prove the real existence of something—in one case the real existence of God and in the other case the real existence of an immortal soul—by the method of a σκοπεῖν ἐν λόγοις. By a σκοπεῖν ἐν λόγοις, we are supposed to arrive at the ἀλήθεια τῶν ὄντων. In Kantian terms: both propositions—‘God exists’ and ‘The soul is immortal’—are on the one hand analytic, and their negations—‘God does not exist’ and ‘The soul is mortal’—therefore false. On the other hand, they presume to give substantive information about reality.

The ‘ultimate final proof’ is in this sense the ontological argument for the immortality of the soul. Both ontological arguments try to prove the extramental and indestructible reality of something by analytic propositions: Plato’s Socrates tries to prove the indestructible reality of the soul, Descartes the (indestructible) reality of God. In contrast to Kant’s opinion that analytic judgments do not enlarge our knowledge,⁶⁵ *both* ontological arguments presume to enlarge our knowledge. The difference lies in this: whereas nowhere in the *Phaedo* does Socrates consider the possibility that he or his interlocutors lack a soul in life, Descartes assumes God’s non-existence.

Now we may also understand better what the meta-physical turn of the Platonic Socrates consists in. It is not the turn from synthetic propositions that can be false to synthetic propositions *a priori* which presume to be always true about things of which no experience is possible, but to analytic propositions *a priori* which are always true or ‘safe’ (*Phd.* 100e1). But these analytic propositions enlarge our knowledge.⁶⁶ Whereas the ‘safe’ (ἀσφαλής), but ‘unlearned

64 Cf. Pakaluk 2010, 643-677.

65 Cf. *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 258/B 314.

66 Reale 1997, 153, writes: “Possiamo, in conclusione, affermare che la platonica ‘seconda navigazione’ costituisce una conquista che segna, in un certo senso, come abbiamo già rilevato all’inizio, la tappa più importante nella storia della metafisica”. He nevertheless does not mention this turn from synthetic propositions to analytic propositions, which

(ἀμαθῆ) answer' (*Phd.* 105c1)—'through the beautiful, beautiful things are beautiful' (*Phd.* 100e1-3)—is merely a quasi-tautological truth, the 'subtler (κομψοτέρα) answer' (*Phd.* 105c2) involves a third item which always has the property, whose presence in particular is what is to be explained: as a thing is hot because of fire, so the soul is immortal because soul brings life. It is therefore not only a tautological analytic truth, but an analytic truth which teaches us something we did not know before: 'the soul is immortal and indestructible' evidently enlarges our knowledge.

Of course, there remain doubts about *both* ontological arguments. I cannot open the whole battery of arguments for and against these two ontological arguments, but confine myself to two counterarguments, one against the ontological argument for the existence of God and one against the ontological argument against the immortality of the soul, which have nevertheless something in common.

Johannes Caterus (ca. 1590-1655), the author of the *First Set of Objections* to the *Meditations*, writes, for example:

Even if it is granted that a supremely perfect being carries the implication of existence in virtue of its very title, it still does not follow that the existence in question is anything actual in the real world (*in rerum natura actu quid esse*); all that follows is that the concept of existence is inseparably (*conceptum existentiae inseparabiliter*) linked to the concept of a supreme being. So you cannot infer that the existence of God is anything actual (*actu quid esse*) unless you suppose that the supreme being actually exists (*actu existere*); for then it will actually contain all perfections, including the perfection of real existence.⁶⁷

This objection is similar to one of the objections of Strato of Lampsacus (ca. 335-269 BC) against the 'ultimate final' proof for the immortality of the soul:

Never can it rashly be accepted that, if the soul does not admit death and is in this sense deathless, it is also indestructible: immortal is namely also a stone in this way, but it is not indestructible.⁶⁸

enlarge our knowledge, as made evident by Brentano 1925, 178-179. But cf. Sedley 2009, 152: "... the necessity that the soul be alive, confer life on whatever it is in, and itself never admit death is presented by Socrates as having an intimate relation to the 'safe' causal efficacy which earlier, in his Second Voyage (*Phaedo* 99d4-102a3), he attributed to Forms".

67 AT VII, 99, tr. Cottingham.

68 Wehrli 1969, fr. 123, part h, p. 38, line 31-32; tr. Ferber. Cf. Repici 2011, 433-440.

Although a stone is not a living being, the example is well chosen to illustrate a weakness of the ‘ultimate final proof’: It proves only that a soul is deathless ‘as long as it is alive’ (cf. *θανπερ ἦ*, *Phd.* 103e5), but therefore it is not indestructible. In other words: whereas the predicate ‘deathless’ describes—at least in the standard post-Kantian and post-Fregean tradition—a conceptual or second-order attribute of which we do not have any real experience, the predicate ‘indestructible’ describes a real or first-order attribute of which we can have real experience like that of a (relatively) indestructible individual stone.⁶⁹ In the same way: if a supremely perfect being carries the implication of indestructible existence in the conceptual or—as I prefer to say—semantic existence sense, it does not carry the implication of existence in the real or the ‘actual’ sense.⁷⁰ *A priori* we cannot say what really and individually exists or does not exist in the future. But Socrates is finally interested not in the immortality and indestructibility of the concept soul, but of his individual soul, if ‘really our souls will be in the Hades’ (*Phd.* 107a1).⁷¹

To meet the objection of Catus, Descartes replies: “But, from the fact that we understand [by clear and distinct perception] that actual existence is necessarily and always conjoined with the other attributes of God, it certainly does follow that God [really] exists” (*AT* VII, 117, tr. Cottingham). But Descartes leaves the decisive point open about whether the existence of God is an ‘actually’ real or first-order predicate, or only a conceptually or semantically real or second-order predicate of God.

So the question remains: what do these arguments prove, the really real (*ὄντως ὄν*, *revera*) or only the conceptually or semantically real existence of God or of an immortal/indestructible soul? We do not have the reply of Plato to Strato, but only of Damascius (ca. 458–after 538 AD) to Strato, who seems to have sided *not* with the Socrates of the *Phaedo*, but with Strato.⁷²

But if God and the immortal/indestructible soul are only conceptually or semantically real—that is, reified thoughts (*νοήματα*)—would they not presuppose something really real? In an analogous vein: if the Platonic ideas were only thoughts (*νοήματα*), were these thoughts not thoughts of something (*τι*), namely Platonic ideas (cf. *Prm.* 132b4–c8)? The Platonic Parmenides uses in this ‘Refutation of Idealism’ or ‘Conceptualism’, in the words of Russell, “a kind of

69 Cf. Frege 1997, 146, note H: “The ontological proof of God’s existence suffers from the fallacy of treating existence as a first-level concept”.

70 For the distinction between real and semantic existence, cf. Ferber 2015, 151 n. 151. It corresponds to that between “existing” (*ὑπάρχειν*) and “subsisting” (*ὑφίστασθαι*), represented by the Stoics (cf. *SVF* II, fr. 322, 488, 541).

71 Cf. Centrone, 2012.

72 Cf. Gertz 2015, 255.

ontological argument to prove the objective reality of ideas”;⁷³ he uses at least a proto-ontological argument, insofar as the concept of idea as the ‘thought of something’ (νόημά τινος) implies the extramental existence or objective reality of this ‘something’—just as the ‘thought of God’ (νόημα θεοῦ) implies in the ontological argument the extramental existence of God.

In this sense, Plato reassumes already in the *Phaedo* the Parmenidean ‘Ur-Identität’ if we may interpret the fragment τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστὶν τε καὶ εἶναι (DK B3) in this *minimal* sense that thinking presupposes Being, that is, that thinking presupposes something that exists as its object.⁷⁴ The history of the ontological argument seems to be a virtually never-ending story or circle, as ‘predicted’ by the goddess of Parmenides: ‘it is indifferent to me where I make a beginning; for there I come back again’ (DK B5). If we begin with thinking we come back again to being, and if we begin with being we arrive back at thinking.

In the same vein as the ‘thought of something’, for Plato the concept or reified thought of an immortal/indestructible soul seems to presuppose an extramental immortal/indestructible soul if ‘soul’ or ‘soul-stuff’⁷⁵ is a general or abstract mass noun and denotes an entity which transfers its immortality/ indestructibility to the individual soul. So the main objection to the ultimate final proof seems to me not that of Strato, but the step from the existence of an immortal and indestructible soul *in general*—to the future existence of my immortal and indestructible *individual* soul if ‘really *our* [individual] souls will be there (τῷ ὄντι ἔσονται ἡμῶν αἱ ψυχαί) in Hades after all’ (*Phd.* 107a1).⁷⁶ This *metabasis* of a second-order predicate of which we have no experience to a first-order predicate of which we will have experience after our death seems to be the decisive mistake in the final argument.

73 Russell 1945, 417: “The real question is: Is there anything we can think of which, by the mere fact that we can think of it, is shown to exist outside our thought? Every philosopher would *like* to say yes, because a philosopher’s job is to find out things about the world by thinking rather than observing. If yes is the right answer, there is a bridge from pure thought to things, if not, not. In this generalized form, Plato uses a kind of ontological argument to prove the objective reality of ideas [and the immortality of the soul].”

74 This interpretation has been defended, e.g. by Shorey 1900, 210–212. Cf. for the relation between Plato and Parmenides, Ferber 1989, 38–38, and esp. 71–73.

75 I owe the expression “soul-stuff” to Gallop 1975, 89–90: “For the idea that ‘soul is immortal’, merely in the sense that there exists a permanent quantum of ‘soul-stuff’, would no more imply the immortality of individual souls than the notion of a permanent quantum of matter implies the immortality of individual bodies”.

76 Cf. already Gallop 1975, 222: “But if ‘soul’ means merely ‘soul-stuff’, the transition to ‘our souls’ might be questioned (see on 64e4–65a3, 90)”.

This post-mortem existence of our individual souls may at best express a ‘great hope’ (*Phd.* 114c9). But if this hope would become true, we are better off if we believe in it already in life. In this sense, we can at least draw the normative conclusion from the factual conclusion if we modify it in the following way: *if* ‘really *our* souls will be there in Hades after all’, we should behave already in life *as if* (οἷον) ‘really’ (τῷ ὄντι) our souls will be there. This seems also to be the teaching of the final myth if we consider it a ‘symbolic *hypotyposis*’ (Kant)—that is, a symbolic presentation without corresponding empirical content of what the future has ‘... in store for those who have died, and—as we have been told since antiquity—something much better for the good than for the bad’ (*Phd.* 63c, tr. Tredennick with minor modifications).⁷⁷

Be that as it may, the fact remains that both of these ‘ontological proofs’ did not convince everybody, and, without a doubt, the final proof for the immortality of the soul did not convince the mature Aristotle when he wrote: ‘... all, however, that these thinkers do is to describe the specific characteristics of the soul; they do not try to determine anything about the body which is to contain it, as if it were possible, as in the Pythagorean myths, that any soul could be clothed in any body—an absurd view, for each body seems to have a form and shape of its own’ (*De an.* 407b20–24, tr. Barnes). It is also significant that Plato did not return to the final proof of Socrates in the *Phaedo* for the immortality of the soul, but did develop another proof (*Phdr.* 245c5–246e3), which relies on the self-motion of the soul and deduces from this self-motion that ‘it cannot have a beginning’ (ἀγένητον) and is ‘indestructible’ (ἀδιάφθορον, *Phdr.* 245d3–4). Aristotle seems not convinced by it either,⁷⁸ because self-motion is a contradictory concept (cf. *Ph.* 8.5, 257b26–258a5).

Nevertheless, Plato returned to the topic not only in the *Phaedrus*, but also in the *Republic* (610e5–611a2) and even in the *Laws* (cf. *Lg.* 894e3–895c11, 896a1–b3), although not in the form of a formal proof. The immortality of the soul remained for Plato, as for his Socrates in the *Phaedo* and *Meno* (cf. 81a10–b7), ‘an old and holy saying’ (παλαιός τε καὶ ἱερὸς λόγος, *Ep.* 7, 335a3) to be obeyed although ‘hard to prove’ (δυσσπόδεικτον, cf. *R.* 488a1).

77 Critique of Judgment, § 59: “All *hypotyposis* (presentation, *subjectio sub adspectum*), or sensible illustration, is twofold. It is either *schematical*, when to a concept comprehended by the Understanding the corresponding intuition is given *a priori*; or it is *symbolical*. In the latter case to a concept only thinkable by the Reason, to which no sensible intuition can be adequate, an intuition is supplied with which accords a procedure of the Judgement analogous to what it observes in schematism: it accords with it, that is, in respect of the rule of this procedure merely, not of the intuition itself; consequently in respect of the form of reflection merely, and not of its content” (tr. Bernard).

78 Cf. for a formal reconstruction of the argument in the *Phaedrus* Ferber 2003, 129.

Moreover, even his Socrates of the *Phaedo* seems not finally convinced of the premises of his proof when he says to Simmias: ‘... our initial hypotheses (τάς γε ὑποθέσεις τὰς πρώτας) [the hypothesis of ideas] really must be examined more clearly, even if the two of you do find them trustworthy (πισταί)’ (107b5-7, tr. Rowe). The initial hypotheses are the hypotheses of ‘the beautiful, the good and every such reality’ (*Phd.* 76d8-9), that is, the hypotheses of the individual Platonic ideas. These hypotheses are in the *Phaedo*—which is not a ‘science of ideas’ (τῶν εἰδῶν σοφία, *Ep.* 6, 322d5) or even a ‘treatise about Ideas’ (*Peri Ideôn*), but rather a drama or ‘tragedy’ of a ‘man’ (ἄνθρωπος, *Phd.* 57a5, 58c7, 58e3; cf. *Lg.* 817b5)⁷⁹—‘not hypotheses in an unqualified sense, but only to the learner’ (Arist. *APo.* 1.10, 76b29-30). They are hypotheses of the πρωταγωνιστής Socrates for two youths (νεανίσκοι, cf. *Phd.* 89a3), the δευτεραγωνιστής Cebes—the ‘most obstinate sceptic among men’ (*Phd.* 77a8-9)—and the τριταγωνιστής Simmias. They act differently in the drama,⁸⁰ but both finally accept the hypothesis of ideas as trustworthy. But when Platonic ideas are presupposed for the existence of an immortal soul, the theory of ideas needs first to be established. Socrates vouches for this hypothesis personally with his intellectual autobiography, and his trustworthiness may be, if not ‘almost the most effective’ (cf. Arist. *Rh.* 1356a13), still an effective means of persuasion. But for this hypothesis we find only *one* “direct argument” in the whole Corpus Platonicum,⁸¹ namely at *Ti.* 51d3-51e6.⁸² The ‘Sticks and Stones’ argument (*Phd.* 74a5-75a3) presupposes the theory of ideas with its use of the emphatic Parmenidean meaning of ἐστὶ (*Phd.* 75b6), but does not yet prove the theory⁸³ any more than the other passages of the *Phaedo* (*Phd.* 65d4-5, 76d7-9, 78d3-7, 100b3-7) in a direct and formal way. They suggest, rather, that Simmias and Cebes are already familiar with it, at least from hearsay (cf. *Phd.* 76d7, 100b1-3). So the final proof remains somewhat in the ‘air’ of the oral history of the early Academy.

In fact, with the metaphor of a ‘raft’ (σχεδία, sc. ναῦς), “literally, ‘improvised boat’”⁸⁴ with which one must sail through life (*Phd.* 85d1-2), the Socrates of the *Phaedo* indicates not only the instrumental character of the flight into the

79 It is a merit of Egger 1900, esp. 25-53, unjustifiably ignored, to have shown this in detail; cf. now also Casertano 2015, esp. 7-32.

80 Cf. Grünwald 1910; Sedley 1996, 14-21.

81 Kahn 1996, 330. Cf. for an analysis Ferber 1998, 424-430.

82 Cf. Ferber 1998.

83 Pace Forcignanò 2018, 249-254; cf. Gallop 1975, 97: “[The theory of Forms] is, however, nowhere defended, but is simply accepted without argument by all parties (65d6, 74b1, 78d8-9, 92d6-e2, 100c1-2, 102a10-b1)”. Svavarsson 2009, 60: “The argument is not intended to establish that there are Forms; their existence is explicitly assumed”.

84 Kanayama 2000, 92.

logoi as a *Hilfskonstruktion*, but also of the hypothesis of the theory of ideas—a *Hilfskonstruktion* which Plato, too, later on “never asserts to be definitely true”.⁸⁵ It is only ‘something necessary because of a hypothesis’ (ἐξ ὑποθέσεως ἀναγκαῖον, cf. Arist. *PA* 1.1, 642a9): if we distinguish between true belief and knowledge, then we must also accept ideas⁸⁶—at least if we may hear from the voice of Timaeus also Plato’s voice: ‘so here’s how I cast my own vote’ (*Ti.* 51d3).

A raft is not a stable vehicle like a sailing or a rowing boat, although it can have, like the raft of Odysseus, to which Simmias may allude (cf. *Phd.* 85d1), sails (ἱστία) as well (cf. Hom. *Od.* 5.259-261). A second voyage on a raft with oars *and* at least *one* sail (ἱστίον) which can be hoisted may also be an apt metaphor for the Socratic δεύτερος πλοῦς in the *Phaedo*. But for all its instability, a raft with oars and one sail is still a better way than swimming without the ‘raft’ of a hypothesis through the troubled water, the πόντος ἀτρύγετος of the γένεσις and φθορά of our lives. This may be especially the case, if many or most of us, like Simmias, can neither find out the truth about the post-mortem destiny of our soul in a direct way by our sensory organs—that is, by a ‘πρῶτος πλοῦς’—nor rely on a presumed divine utterance.⁸⁷

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85 Burnyeat and Frede 2015, 167 n. 76.

86 Cf. Ferber 1998, 438.

87 An earlier version appeared under the title: *Deuteros Plous, the Immortality of the Soul and the Ontological Argument for the Existence of God*. In: G. Cornelli, T. Robinson, and F. Bravo, eds., *Plato’s Phaedo. Selected Papers of the Eleventh Symposium Platonicum*, Baden-Baden 2018, pp. 221-230. For stimulating discussions I thank the audience during my presentation in the plenary session of 7th July 2016 of the XI Symposium Platonicum, Brasilia, esp. Andrea Capra, Barbara Sattler and Harold Tarrant, and for written comments, Ivana Costa, Yahei Kanayama and Stefano Martinelli Tempesta and two anonymous reviewers. An earlier English version was presented at the Higher School of Economics, Moscow, 24th April 2017, and a German version was presented at the University of Zurich, 18th May 2018. I thank Olga Alieva and Christoph Riedweg for the invitation and some helpful remarks.

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Appendix

Translations of Phd. 99e4-100a3

Quapropter operae pretium esse censui, ut ad rationes confugerem, atque in illis rerum veritatem considerarem. Forte vero nostra haec similitudo non omni ex parte congruat. Non enim prorsus assentior, eum, qui res in rationibus contemplatur, in imaginibus aspicere potius, quam qui in operibus intuetur. (Marsilio Ficino)

So I thought I should take refuge in theories, and study in them the truth of the things that are. Perhaps my comparison is, in a certain way, inept; as I don't at all admit

that one who examines in theories the things that are is any more studying them in images than one who examines them in concrete. (D. Gallop)

So I decided that I should take refuge in theories and arguments and look into the truth of things in them. Now maybe in a way it does not resemble what I'm comparing it to. For I don't at all accept that someone who, when studying things, does so in theories and arguments, is looking into them in images any more than someone who does so in facts. (A. Long and D. Sedley)

Sondern mich dünkte, ich müsse zu den Gedanken meine Zuflucht nehmen und in diesen das wahre Wesen der Dinge anschauen. Doch vielleicht ähnelt das Bild auf gewisse Weise nicht so, wie ich es aufgestellt habe. Denn das möchte ich gar nicht zugeben, dass, wer das Seiende in Gedanken betrachtet, es mehr in Bildern betrachtet, als wer in den Dingen. (F.D. Schleiermacher)

Es erschien mir demnach notwendig, zu den Begriffen meine Zuflucht zu nehmen und an ihrer Hand das wahre Wesen der Dinge zu erforschen. Vielleicht trifft mein Vergleich nicht ganz zu; denn ich leugne auf das bestimmteste, dass der, welcher die Dinge begrifflich betrachtet, sich in höherem Grade einer bildlichen Betrachtungsweise bediene als der, welcher sich unmittelbar an die gegebenen Dinge wendet. (O. Apelt)

Es schien mir daher nötig zu sein, meine Zuflucht zu den Argumenten zu nehmen und in ihnen die Realität des Seienden zu untersuchen. Vielleicht ist aber mein Vergleich in gewissem Sinne unpassend: Denn ich will gar nicht zugeben, dass jemand, der das Seiende in Argumenten untersucht, dabei eher in Bildern untersucht als derjenige, der es in der Wirklichkeit untersucht. (Th. Ebert)

Voici alors ce qu'il me sembla devoir faire: me réfugier du côté des raisonnements, et, à l'intérieur de ces raisonnements, examiner la vérité des êtres. Il se peut d'ailleurs que, dans un sens, ma comparaison ne soit pas ressemblante: car je n'accorde pas du tout que lorsque l'on examine les êtres à l'intérieur d'un raisonnement, on ait plus affaire à leur images que lorsqu'on les examine dans des expériences directes. (M. Dixsaut)

Perciò ritenni di dovermi rifugiare in certi postulati e considerare in questi la verità delle cose che sono. Forse il paragone che ora ti ho fatto in un certo senso non calza, giacché io non ammetto di certo che chi considera le cose alla luce di questi postulati le consideri in immagini più di chi le considera nella realtà. (G. Reale)

Juzgué, pues, que era necesario refugiarme en las proposiciones y buscar en ellas la verdad de las cosas; por cierto que la comparación de que me sirvo no me parece exacta, porque no convengo de ningún modo que quien examina las cosas en las proposiciones las examina en imágenes más que quien lo hace en los hechos. (C. Eggers Lan)

Opiné, pues, que era preciso refugiarme en los conceptos para examinar en ellos la verdad real. Ahora bien, quizás eso a lo que lo comparo no es apropiado en cierto sentido. Porque no estoy muy de acuerdo en que el que examina la realidad en los conceptos la contemple más en imágenes, que el que la examina en los hechos. (C. Garcia Gual)